Allowing farmers to develop their own fields under NREGS

*359. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM.
SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI:

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has favoured the extension of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) to enable the farmers to develop their own fields;

(b) whether to include the farmers under the NREGS to work on their own fields is a new idea and can be considered; and

(c) if so, whether any final decision in this regard has been taken and whether Members of Parliament also recommended to extend the NREGS to the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAGUVANSH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Schedule I of NREG Act, 2005 provides for the various activities of work in their order of priority which can be taken up under the Act. Para 1 (iv) of Schedule I provided for provision of irrigation facility to land owned by households belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or to land of beneficiaries of land reforms or that of the beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana of the Government of India. *Vide* notification dated 6.3.2007, this provision has been amended to provide for provision of irrigation facility, horticulture plantation and land development facilities on land owned by households belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or to Below Poverty Line families or to beneficiaries of land reforms or to the beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana of the Government of India.

(b) No such proposal is under consideration.

(c) No recommendation from Members of Parliament for extension of NREGS to farmers has been received in the Ministry of Rural Development.

Losses due to rains in southern States I

*360. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that heavy rains lashed the southern Indian States during March this year, which caused heavy losses both of human lives and property;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) whether any Central assistance has been given to the States for the losses suffered; and

(d) if so, the details thereof, State-wise and the basis thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI RADHIKA V. SELVI): (a) and (b) The following southern States/UT Administration, based on their preliminary assessment, have reported damage due to heavy rains/hailstorm during March and April, 2008:—

SI. No.	State/UT	No. of human li ves lost	No. of animals perished	Cropped area affected (in lakh Ha.)	No. of Houses/ Huts Damaged
1.	Andhra Pradesh (due to hailstorms/heavy rains)	34	1643	1.28	3556
2.	Karnataka	26	2631	2.28	15479
3.	Kerala	4	NR	0.08	NR
4.	Tamil Nadu	24	804	3.91	5782
5.	Puducherry	NR	NR	0.16	NR

NR=Not reported

(c) and (d) The details of Central assistance provided to Southern States are as under:—

SI. No.	State/UT	Advance release of Central share of CRF for 2008-09 (Rs. In crore)	Status of visit of Central teams
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Under Consideration	Being constituted
2.	Karnataka	Under Consideration	7th-9th April, 08
3.	Kerala	37.115	5th-6th April, 08
4.	Tamil Nadu	96.77	6th—10th April, 08
5.	Puducherry	#	being constituted

Note: Allocation of funds under Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) is fixed by the successive Finance Commissions and corpus is contributed by the Government of India and State Governments in the ratio of 3:1. Central contribution is released in two equal instalments in June and December every year.

#Puducherry, being a Union Territory is not covered under Calamity Relief Fund (CRF)/National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF). The necessary amount will be released as additional Central assistance from UT budget of Ministry of Home Affairs.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Revoking custom duty reduction on palm oil

2482. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has reduced the customs duty on edible oils, including palm oil; and

(b) if so, considering the plight of coconut farmers in Kerala will the Government revoke the decision to reduce customs duty on palm oil?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government has recently reduced the customs duty on edible oils including palm oil keeping